CHAPTER VI

ROMANTICISM RECLASSIFIED

In the introduction to *Fables of Identity*, Frye pleads his case for a "Great Tradition" which he recognises from his long association of Blakean studies:

The hinge of the total argument, I suppose, is my conception of Romanticism. The Romantic movement in English literature seems to me now to be a small part of one of the most decisive as to make everything that has been written since post-Romantic, including, of course, everything that is regarded by its producers as anti-Romantic. (3)

Frye claims that his criticism constitutes a Romantic poetics which may be looked upon as an attempt to provide for modern culture a framework of literary theory as useful as Aristotle's poetics were for traditional culture. Although Frye cannot lay claims, like Aristotle of summing-up the experience of his culture, Frye recognises the importance of a continuity
between nineteenth and twentieth century literature, the vast shift in the history of ideas, and its significance for the literary critics. When he attempts to build an inductive poetics like Aristotle's he is influenced by the effects of Romanticism on literary theory and practice. These "effects" might be explained in a general way by saying that Romanticism replaces the traditional didactic and mimetic theories of art with expressive and autotelic theories; the Romantic concentrates on his own psyche (expressive theory) or treats the work as an end in itself (autotelic). This claim forces upon us a distinction between "modern" and "traditional" literary experience where by "traditional" is meant the ideas associated with the notions of a Supreme Being and the creation of an ordered hierarchial universe built on immutable principles, where man's mind conforms in some objective way to the truth in things, where man can therefore, read the commonsense laws of nature which guide their conduct, and where these principles have been largely formulated and preserved in the traditional wisdom of a conservative society. And in contrast the "modern" complex of ideas assume that man creates the values of his civilization, including his ideas of God, that the
universe is not a finished product but an evolving process, that the ambiguous interplay of subject and object makes epistemological certitude impossible, that man can be said to know the truth only in flashes of intuition, and that experience is not only the best teacher, but the only reliable one (Hendy 318-35).

Both, traditional and Romantic concepts of criticism are embedded in history, and given the contingent nature of history these concepts are liable to be highly complex. Yet Romantic thought itself, however complex and ambiguous, was partly the result of a reaction to the traditional modes of poetry and criticism. For the traditionalist, both poet and critic had available to them objective criteria with respect to subject, character, and diction, and the emphasis was to be on typical experiences because individual experiences, not being typical enough, cannot have universal appeal. In a comment which looks, at the same time, back to the tradition summarized by Frank Kermode and forward to Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence," Frye makes a pertinent point: "The underestimating of Convention appears to be a result of may even be a part of, the tendency, marked from romantic times on, to think of the
individual as ideally prior to his society" (Anatomy 96-97). And "it is not only the inexperienced reader who looks for a residual originality," but the experienced critic as well for "most of us tend to think of a poet's real achievement present in what he stole, and we are thus apt to concentrate on peripheral rather than on central critical facts" (96). Frye does not speculate on the nature of the self, but nevertheless uses a conception of it in his argument on romantic literary ideals of original genius. His contention is that the self is not ideally prior to its society, nor the individual poem isolated from literary tradition:

The view opposed to this, that the new baby is conditioned by a hereditary and environmental kinship to a society which already exists, has, whatever doctrines may be inferred from it, the initial advantage of being closer to the facts it deals with. The literary consequence... is that the new poem like the new baby, is born into an already existing order of words, and is typical of the structure of poetry to which it is attached. The new baby is his own society appearing once
again as a unit of individuality, and the new poem has a similar relation to its poetic society. (97)

Frye does not wish to deny that at a certain level of existence there exists a self that may be distinctively differentiated from other selves, but he believes that at the deepest and most authentic levels of existence, the self is an all accommodating medium that is peculiarly suited for the transmitting of those ever expanding literary structures which are classified as archetypal mythoi and images.

In order to avoid the subjectivism and irresolvable disputes of taste, and thereby achieve objectivity of description, Frye puts forward his key assumption that all literary expression is controlled by a select number of literary universals. These "four narrative pregeneric" categories, or pregeneric mythoi, are the deep structures and the inevitable constituents of a literary imagination. By insisting on such autonomy for the imagination Romantic writing may be accused of devaluing the social function of literature, and the Romantics have had to argue in a new key in favour of this social function and its relevance to
literature. Frye's theory of criticism brooks both these Romantic tendencies. On the one hand he develops a theory of meaning that ensures autonomy for the literary imagination, while, on the other hand, fosters a theory of value which focuses on the social importance of imagination. The two theories operate simultaneously in his "theory of symbols."

In the Anatomy of Criticism, Frye outlines five different "phases" of symbol. The theory of symbols is directed toward an analysis of criticism where "phases" are contexts within which literature has been and can be interpreted. They are primarily meant to describe critical procedures rather than literary types which in its turn means that the phases represent methods of analysing symbolic meaning. Frye attempts to discover the various levels of symbolic meaning and to combine them into a comprehensive theory. Where "symbol" is used to mean "any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention" (71). This includes everything from the letters a writer uses to spell his words to the poem itself as a symbol reflecting the entire poetic universe. This broad definition suits Frye's purpose
of associating the right kind of symbolism with each phase, and hence finds a placement for the phase at the highest level of generality. Used as a sign, the symbol results in the descriptive phase; a motif, in the literal phase; as image, in the formal phase; as archetype, in the mythic phase; and as monad, in the anagogic phase.

The first two of Frye's contexts, the "literal" and "descriptive" phases, are considered together in his discussion because,

Whenever we read anything we find our attention moving in two directions at once. One direction is outward or centrifugal, in which we keep going outside our reading from the individual words to the things they mean. . . . The other direction is inward or centripetal, in which we try to develop from the words a sense of the larger verbal pattern they make. . . . Verbal structures may be classified according to whether the final direction of meaning is outward or inward. In descriptive or assertive writing the final direction is outward. Here the verbal structure is intended to represent things
external to it, and it is valued in terms of the accuracy with which it does represent them. . . .

In all literary verbal structures the final direction of meaning is inward. In literature the standards of outward meaning are secondary for literary works do not pretend to describe or assert, and hence are not true, not false, and yet not tautological either . . .

Literary meaning may best be described . . . as hypothetical, and a hypothetical or assumed relation to the external world is part of what is usually meant by the word "imaginative." (73-74)

The inward meaning is manifested as the "literal" symbol, the outward as the "descriptive." Again, when the symbol is a sign, the movement of reference is centrifugal, as in descriptive or assertive works; and when the symbol is a "motif," the movement is centripetal, as in imaginative, or to use Frye's term "hypothetical" works. "Now as a poem is literally a poem" writes Frye, "it belongs, in its literal
context, to the class of things called poems, which in their turn form part of the larger class known as works of art." He is thus led to reason that "a poem's meaning is literally its pattern or integrity as a verbal structure. Its words cannot be separated and attached to sign-values: all possible sign-values of a word are absorbed into a complexity of verbal relationships." Whereas, in the descriptive phase, "a poem is not primarily a work of art, but primarily a verbal structure or set of representative words," whose meaning is "the relation of its pattern to a body of assertive propositions, and the conception of symbolism involved is the one which literature has in common, not with the arts, but with other structures in words" (78).

Although every work of literature is characterized by both, the literal and descriptive phases of symbolism there can be an infinite number of permutations along the descriptive-literal axis, since a given work tends to be influenced more by one phase than the other.

Thus when the descriptive phase predominates, the narrative of literature tends toward
realism and its meaning toward the didactic or descriptive. The limits, at this end of the continuum would be represented by such writers as Zola and Drieser, whose work "goes about as far as a representation of life, to be judged by its integrity as a structure of words, as it could go and still remain literature." At the other end, as a complement to naturalism is the tradition of writers like Mallarme, Rimbaud Rilke, Pound and Eliot. Here the emphasis is on the literal phase of meaning: literature becomes a "centripetal verbal pattern, in which elements of direct or verifiable statement are subordinated to the integrity of that pattern." (Denham, Critical Method 34).

Frye is of the opinion that "the achieving of an acceptable theory of literal meaning in criticism rests on a relatively recent development in literature (Anatomy 80). This achievement, he points out, lies in the rhetorical analyses characteristic of the New Criticism:

The criticism as well as the creation of
literature reflects the distinction between literal and descriptive aspects of symbolism. The type of criticism associated with research and learned journals treats the poem as a verbal document, to be related as fully as possible to the history and the ideas that it reflects. The poem is most valuable to this kind of criticism when it is most explicit and descriptive, and when its core of imaginative hypothesis can be most easily separated. . . .

What is now called "new criticism," on the other hand, is largely criticism based on the conception of a poem as literally a poem. It studies the symbolism of a poem as an ambiguous structure of interlocking motifs; it sees the poetic pattern of meaning as a self-contained "texture," and it thinks of the external relations of a poem as being with the other arts . . . . These two aspects of criticism are often thought of as antithetical . . . . They are of course complementary, not antithetical, but still the difference between them is important. (81-82)

The principal assumption underlying Frye's analysis of
the descriptive and literal phases is similar with the major proponents of the New Criticism chiefly those whose concern has been to locate the meaning of poetry in the nature of its symbolic language. The New Criticism, which is at least as old as Coleridge, bases its tenets in the autotelic theories of the Romantics, that is, glorification of the poem as an end in itself. The characteristic method of inference in each of their procedures is based on a similar dialectic, and all, including Frye, employ a process of reasoning to what the language and meaning of poetry are from what assertive discourse and rational meaning are not (Crane The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry 100-102). Frye's clear enunciation of this "literal" meaning is fundamental to his theories of meaning and value in literature:

Frye's theory of symbols results in an expansion and rearrangement of the medieval scheme of four levels of interpretation, according to which literal meaning is discursive or representational meaning. Its point of reference is centrifugal. When Dante interprets scripture literally, he points to the correspondence between an event in the
Bible and a historical event, or at least one he assumed to have occurred in the past. In this sense, literature signifies real events. The first medieval level of symbolism thus becomes Frye's descriptive level. His own literal phase, however, has no corresponding rung on the medieval ladder. The advantage of rearranging the categories, Frye believes, is that he now has a framework to account for a poem literally as a poem—as a self-contained verbal structure whose meaning is not dependent upon any external reference. This redesignation is simply one more way that Frye can indicate the difference between a symbol as motif and sign. As a principle of Frye's system, it reveals the dialectical method he uses to define poetic meaning. (Denham, Critical Method 36-37)

This explanation of literary meaning may be seen as being analogous in post-Romantic criticism to the Copernican revolution in Kant's epistemology. The mind not only half-perceives, it also half-creates. That is to say, the imagination is autonomous.
In the third or "formal" phase of symbolism, Frye approaches directly the communication of discursive meaning from author to reader, and specifically relates it to the imagery of poetry, thereby attempting to move beyond the familiar distinctions of the New Criticism. Formal criticism is seen as studying literature from the point of view of either mythos or dianoia. The meaning of these two terms remain almost the same as they had in the first two phases with the difference that they function differently. In the literal and descriptive phases, narrative (mythos) and meaning (dianoia) resolved themselves into two opposite axes, but in the formal phase they are required to converge and eventually unify, for, Frye argues, it is the essential unity of a work of art which the word "form" is usually meant to convey (37). He explains this by first adapting the concept of imitation to infract upon the form-content dichotomy.

A mythos is a secondary imitation of an action, which means, not that it is two removes from reality, but that it describes typical actions, being more philosophical than
Human thought (theoria) is primarily imitated by discursive writing, which makes specific and particular predications. A dianoia is a secondary imitation of thought, a mimesis logou, concerned with typical thought, with the images, metaphors, diagrams, and verbal ambiguities out of which specific ideas develop. . . . it is clear that all verbal structures with meaning are verbal imitations of that elusive psychological and physiological process known as thought, a process stumbling through emotional entanglements, sudden irrational convictions, involuntary gleams of insight, rationalized prejudices, and blocks of panic and inertia, finally to reach a completely incommunicable intuition. Anyone who imagines that philosophy is not a verbal imitation of this process, but the process itself, has clearly not done much thinking. (Anatomy 83).

The assumption underlying the argument is that the concept of secondary imitation, by virtue of its being typical, is a principle which unifies formal criticism.
In formal imitation, "the work of art does not reflect external events and ideas, but exists between the example and the precept" (84). And that, "The central principle of the formal phase, that a poem is an imitation of nature, is . . . a principle which isolates the individual poem" (95). Frye's technique of using the concept of typicality is to avoid the antithesis implicit in the literal and descriptive phases. His formal criticism thus extends the post-Romantic assumptions implied in the first two phases. "Formal criticism . . . is commentary, and commentary is the process of translation into explicit or discursive language what is implicit in the poem" (86). Yet Frye's use of the word "typical" is equivocal: more philosophical than philosophy. One can see the barely concealed Romantic assumption that one cannot quite thrust any abstract analysis of a concrete experience. Frye, for instance, is critical of the "intentional fallacy":

The failure to make in practice, the most elementary of all distinctions in literature, the distinction between fiction and fact, hypothesis and assertion, imaginative and discursive writing, produces what in criticism
has been called the "intentional fallacy," the notion that poet has a primary intention of conveying meaning to a reader, and that the first duty of a critic is to recapture that intention. The word intention is analogical: it implies a relation between two things, usually a conception and an act. But a poet's primary concern is to produce a work of art, and hence his intention can only be expressed by some kind of tautology.

In other words, a poet's intention is centripetally directed. It is directed towards putting words together, not towards aligning words with meanings. One may pursue the centripetal intention as far as genre, as a poet intends to produce, not simply a poem but a certain kind of poem. One has to assume, as an essential heuristic axiom, that the work as produced constitutes the definitive record of the writer's intention. (86-87).

Wimsatt and Beardsley, however, do not simply deny that knowledge of a poet's intention is necessary to the
proper critical appreciation and judgement of his poems. They extend their denial to the Romantic claim for the relationship of the poet's personality to his poems. They join the first issue with the second in order to provide a theoretical foundation of T.S. Eliot's attempt in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," to disconnect the link that the Romantics had claimed between the personality of the poet and his poems. They lend their position further theoretical support with the argument that poems are verbal structures made out of public languages which is governed by the conventions of a language community ("The Intentional Fallacy," in The Verbal Icon 3-18).

Criticism in the formal phase tries to isolate the ideas embodied in the structure of poetic imagery. This produces allegorical interpretation: "All commentary is allegorical interpretation, and attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic imagery" (Anatomy 89). Frye sees the distinction between two representational pieces of work (The Faerie Queen, and The Castle) as depending on how explicitly the allegorist "indicates the relationship of his images
to examples and precepts, and so tries to indicate how a commentary on him should proceed" (90). All literature, therefore, can be organized along a continuum of formal meaning, from the most to the least allegorical. What Frye does, in essence, is to redefine the word "allegory." and thereby expand its ordinary meaning. Frye uses the term to refer not only to a literary convention but also to indicate a universal structural principle of literature. It is considered to be universal because all literature is seen in relation to mythos and dianoia: the relationship between mythos and dianoia is so explicit that it prescribes the direction which commentary must take.

Frye is conscious of the fact that the first three phases of symbol fail to establish the social value of art. The first two phases is concerned with the self-contained world of the autonomous imagination, and the third with the problematical judgements of the abstracting intellect. He further points out an analogous weakness in the two forms of criticism historical and rhetorical, complementary to these phases. The New Criticism (rhetorical) sees the work
of art as an end in itself and historical criticism is bound by an allegorizing commentary. At this point, the romanticist faces sanctions of value. The early Romantics have left behind a legacy in modern liberalism which is an echo of the special world of the artist and his work, and the Romantic transcendence from the self to society has been some corollary of Shelley's "the great instrument of moral good is the imagination." Frye's "educated imagination" is a twentieth century version of this heritage. Moreover, he is conscious of the Romanticist's hurdle:

Frye's . . . . contention that the self is not prior to its society is followed through, in his examinations of literary structure, only in that he places literature within a literary society and the history of literary society, never within a broader social context; his contention has, apparently, no force whatsoever for the critical self. As he rises, unconstrained by cultural and historical determinates, carried on the wings of an unsituated critical discourse, to realm of transparent consciousness, our archetypal
critic believes that he sees the text in its actual determinacy of form—that he can make letter-perfect mimetic reports on the structural foundations of literature. With his fear of indeterminancy with his relegation of taste and subjectivity to the realm of irrelevance, and with his heavy reliance on a subject-object model drawn from nineteenth-century science and nineteenth-century theories of interpretation, Frye... practices, or thinks he practices, a hermeneutics of the innocent eye.

While Frye's thought seems to put great distance between itself and a solipsist-courting poetics of isolation, another thrust in it appears to seek the very separations desired by Kermode's romantics. This isolationist tendency is somewhat obscured by that fact that it is not the individual poet who is given a privileged place by Frye but the society of all poets across history: "poets as a whole class," he tells us, "are entrusted" with a "total body of vision." (Lentricchia 9-10).
And in this context Frye urges us to believe that "The work of imagination presents us with a vision, not of the personal greatness of the poet, but of something impersonal and far greater: the vision of decisive act of spiritual freedom, the vision of the recreation of man" (Anatomy 94).

The artist communicates this vision, according to Frye, by virtue of the fourth, the "mythical" phase of symbol. The symbol which characterizes this phase Frye calls the "archetype" which he defines to mean "a literary symbol or cluster of symbols which are used recurrently throughout literature, and thereby become conventional" (Fables 120). Frye's archetypes, in this way, make up practically the whole body of literary conventions, anything one author learns from another about how to communicate in a work of art. Further, the ultimate object of archetypal criticism "is to consider, not simply a poem as an imitation of nature, but the order of nature as a whole imitated in a corresponding order of words" (Anatomy 96). Poetry, Frye says, is not simply

an aggregate of artifacts imitating nature, but one of the activities of human artifice
taken as a whole. If we may use the word "civilization" for this we may say that our fourth phase looks at poetry as one of the techniques of civilization. It is concerned, therefore with the social aspect of poetry, with poetry as the focus of a community. The symbol in this phase is the communicable unit, to which I give the name archetype: that is, a typical or recurring image. I mean by an archetype a symbol which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience. And as the archetype is the communicable symbol, archetypal criticism is primarily concerned with literature as a social fact and as a mode of communication. By the study of conventions and genres, it attempts to fit poems into the body of poetry as a whole. (99)

The order of words which imitate the order of nature is Prye's way of looking at the Romantic view that man creates, imposes on nature—forms which express his spiritual desires.
The symbol as archetype is the first principle underlying Frye's definition of the mythical phase. The pairs of opposites in his dialectic (mythos and dianoia) now take on the aspects recurrence and desire, and ritual and Myth.

Every phase of symbolism has its particular approach to narrative and to meaning. In the literal phase, narrative is a flow of significant sounds, and meaning an ambiguous and complex verbal pattern. In the descriptive phase, narrative is an imitation of real events, and meaning an imitation of actual objects or propositions. In the formal phase, poetry exists between the example and the precept. In the exemplary event there is an element of recurrence; in the precept, or statement about what ought to be, there is a strong element of desire, or what is called "wish-thinking." These elements of recurrence and desire come into the foreground in archetypal criticism which studies poems as units of poetry as a whole and symbols as units of communication.
From such a point of view the narrative aspect of literature is a recurrent act of symbolic... (and) the significant content is the conflict of desire and reality which has for its basis the work of the dream. Ritual and dream, therefore, are the narrative (mythos) and significant content (dianoia) respectively of literature in its archetypal aspect. (104-105).

In order to explain the power of the archetype to communicate Frye relies on two fundamental concepts of recurrent human experience, borrowed from modern psychology and anthropology "dream" and "ritual." Frye, however, is careful to emphasize the distinction between the aims of criticism and those of other disciplines. The critic, he points out, "is concerned only with ritual or dream patterns which are actually in what he is studying, however they got there" (109). And further explains, elsewhere, that 'Wherever we have archetypal symbolism we pass from the question 'What does this symbol, sea or tree or serpent or character, mean in this work or art?' to the question 'What does
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it mean in my imaginative comprehension of such things as a whole?" Thus the presence of archetypal symbolism makes the individual poem not its own object, but a phase of imaginative experience" ("Three Meanings of Symbolism" 18). Thus, Frye is also able to see that Cassirer, Spengler, Frazer, Jung, and Eliade are themselves students of symbolism whose works provide us with a grammar of the human imagination. Cassirer's symbolic forms, like those found in literature, take their structure from the mind and their content from the natural world. And Frazer's expansive collections of material, because they give us a grammar of unconscious symbolism on both its personal and its social sides, will be of greater benefit to the poet and literary critic than to the anthropologist. Thus The Golden Bough, like Jung's Psychology of the Unconscious, becomes primarily a work of literary criticism. Similarly Eliade's studies in Religionsgeschichte are especially important for the literary critic because they provide a grammar of initiatory and
comparative symbolism. (Denham, Critical Method 45)

The two organising rhythms, recurrence and desire, ritual and dream—the centrifugal and centripetal perspectives—do not finally move in opposite directions in Frye's scheme, they interpenetrate, to use his term for it. They appear archetypally in a given work depending on whether the attention is on narrative or significant meaning which Frye also refers to as "imagery." Narrative at its most extreme would be an act of unconscious repetition in which any meaning would be only latent. Whereas, imagery is purely a state of intuitive perception, incommunicable without narrative. The two aspects of communication are therefore integrated, and this union or interpenetration Frye calls "myth." "Myth" he says, "gives meaning to ritual and narrative to dream; it is the identification of ritual and dream, in which the former is seen to be the latter in movement" (Anatomy 107). Myth, then, is the form in which men communicate civilization.

To see archetypal criticism as concerned with
the social aspects of poetry is, as Frye says, to emphasize the relationship of the individual poem to other poems. But this is only one aspect of what should be stressed, for a poem is also a "part of the total human imitation of nature that we call civilization" (105). Criticism specifically archetypal criticism, therefore, is concerned not simply with convention and genre, but because it views the symbol as a natural object with a human meaning, its scope is expanded to include civilization. And from this perspective, poetry becomes a product of a vision of the goals of human work.

The fourth phase of symbolism justifies literature, but Frye feels the need to move beyond the archetypal phase and the goals of civilization where art is not an end in itself "to culture, where it is disinterested and liberal, and stands on its own feet" (115). Such a statement reveals Frye's debt to

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1 See also pages 99 and 112 - 13.
the Romantic tradition of nineteenth century liberalism. By a skillful combination of this tradition with the autotelic theories, especially the New Criticism of the twentieth century Frye is able to propose a "unified field theory" which unites the high claim for the autonomy of the work of art with the equally high claim for its cultural value. Criticism, he feels, seems to be badly in need of a coordinating principle, a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology will see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole.

The first postulate of this inductive leap is the same as that of any science: the assumption of a total coherence. (16)

This assumption founded on the analogy of literature to a natural organism postulates "a center of the order of words." It leads "to the conception of literature as existing in its own universe, no longer a commentary on life or reality but containing life and reality in a system of verbal relationships" (122).
The fifth phase of symbolism which Frye calls the "anagogic phase" is his ultimate critical vision. This phase grows naturally out of the fourth, for unless there is a "center of the order of words" the study of archetypes is simply "an endless series of free associations." For "If there are such things as archetypes at all," Frye says, "then, we have to take yet another step and conceive the possibility of a self-contained literary universe" (118).

The foundation of such a universe lies in Frye's own literary experience, the feeling he has of being at the centre of activity when in the presence of the greatest works of literature. Robert Denham summarizes the essential features of such a universe; he sees the idea of a center to the order of words is consistent with, even a logical consequence of the imagery Frye has already used to describe the structure of literature. If the literary modes are cyclical and if the critical phases are parallel to the modes then it stands to reason that the cycle must have a center. In short, the notion of
"converging significance" does not fit well into a strictly linear paradigm. More important than this, however, is the idea of order itself. If literature does constitute a total order, then there must be some principle holding it together. We have already seen Frye assert that the function of the archetypal critic (in the fourth phase) is to search out those principles of structure which works of literature have in common. . . . (However), one can never arrive at the self-contained whole, which is literature itself simply by studying archetypes for as symbols they represent only parts of the whole. The existence of a total order among all literary works is the prior assumption, therefore, which makes it necessary for Frye to establish a norm underlying the order. And this norm is the center, the "still point" around which his literary universe revolves. (Critical Method 49).

This Platonic realm of ideas would incorporate a pool
of the central archetypes, the patterns of desire and recurrence, freed from all the restraints of the world of experience.

In the anagogic phase, literature imitates the total dream of man, and so imitates the thought of a human mind which is at the circumference and not at the center of its reality. We see here the completion of the imaginative revolution begun when we passed from the descriptive to the formal phase of symbolism. . . . When we pass into anagogy nature becomes, not the container, but the thing contained, and the archetypal universal symbols, the city, the garden, the guest, the marriage, are no longer the desirable forms that man constructs inside nature, but are themselves the forms of nature. Nature is now inside the mind of an infinite man who builds his cities out of the Milky Way. This is not reality, but it is the conceivable or imaginative limit of desire, which is infinite, eternal, and hence apocalyptic. By an apocalypse I mean primarily the imaginative
conception of the whole of nature as the content of an infinite and eternal living body which, if not human, is closer to being human than to being inanimate. (Anatomy 119).

Again,

Anagogically . . . poetry unites total ritual, or unlimited social action with total dream or unlimited individual thought. Its universe is infinite and boundless hypothesis: it cannot be contained within any actual civilization or set of moral values for the same reason that no structure of imagery can be restricted to one allegorical interpretation. Here the dianoia of art is no longer a mimesis logou, but the logos, the shaping word which is both reason and . . . praxis or creative art. The ethos or art is no longer a group of characters within a natural setting, but a universal man who is also a divine being or a divine being conceived in anthropomorphic terms. (120)

Frye says that in the fifth phase the symbol is a
monad, "all symbols being united in a single infinite and eternal verbal symbol which is, as dianoia, the Logos, and, as mythos, total creative act" (121). That is, the "monad" refers to the individual poem which appears as a "microcosm" of all literature, an individual manifestation of the total order of words (121).

In one of his most influential essays, "New Directions from Old" (reprinted in Fables of Identity) Frye points out that even historians and philosophers who are supposedly confined in their enquiry to the facts about the past or to the abstractions that are discursively logical, produce "symmetrical cosmologies" when they begin to construct a system. In the Anatomy Frye says,

The link between rhetoric and logic is "doodle" or associative diagram, the expression of the conceptual by the spatial. . . . Very often a "structure" or "system" of thought can be reduced to a diagrammatic pattern—in fact both words are to some extent
A Philosopher is of great assistance to his reader when he realizes the presence of such a diagram and extracts it, as Plato does in his discussion of the divided line. We cannot go far in any argument without realizing that there is some kind of graphic formula involved. . . . the feeling that one point is "central" and another peripheral . . . some kind of geometrical basis. (335-36).

Frye, who is increasingly concerned with the systematic study of literature, is aware that his own systematic criticism is a set of conceptual myths—a kind of cosmological doodle.

The circle is Frye's favourite diagrammatic figure. The metaphor of the cycle (or circle) Frye adapts from Spengler, whose theory of the organic growth of cultures in Decline of the West, left a lasting impression on him. He acknowledges that

1 For Frye's interpretation of Spengler's theory of the growth of cultures, see his review of Toynbee's A Study of History in The Canadian Forum 27 (March 1947) reprinted in Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature, pp. 76-83.
Spengler "provided that basis for the conception of modes" outlined in the Anatomy (Spiritus Mundi 113). It, therefore, should not upset a student of his criticism to encounter the circle often in Frye's schema. The circle is an emblem for two of Frye's most pervasive Romantic assumptions.

The first of these is the concept that he considers essential to meaningful literary criticism, that there is a "a center of the order of words." If we assume that there is a centre, then it should automatically follow that there is a circumference. Man would reach that circumference if he had a perfect vision in the anagogic phase of symbolism of the total order of words. "He would then feel that he had moved from the center to the circumference of his verbal universe. He would feel himself to be the container, not the thing contained" (Hendy 328). A similar viewpoint is to be found in modern psychology where the circle (or sphere) is explained as a symbol of the Self. It expresses the totality of the psyche in all its aspects, including the relationship between man and the
whole of nature. Whether the "symbol of the circle" appears in primitive sun worship or modern religion, in myths or dreams, in the mandalas drawn by Tibetan monks, in the ground plans of cities, or in the spherical concepts of early astronomers, it always points to the single most vital aspect of life—its ultimate wholeness.

An Indian creation myth relates that the god Brahma, standing on a huge, thousand-petaled lotus, turned his eyes to the four points of the compass. This fourfold survey from the circle of the lotus was a kind of preliminary orientation, an indispensable taking of bearings, before he began his work of creation.

A similar story is told of Buddha. At the moment of his birth, a lotus flower rose from the earth and he stepped into it to gaze into the ten directions of space. . . . This symbolic gesture of survey was the most concise method of showing that from the moment of his birth, the Buddha was a unique
personality, predestined to receive illumination. His personality and his further existence were given the imprint of wholeness. (Jaffe, "Symbolism in the Visual Arts" 266-67)

In a sense, then, Frye's circles may be said to symbolize his aspirations. The examples cited above are not intended to suggest a premature deification (as Geoffrey Hartman corrects himself when he uses Copernicus's image of the "virile man standing in the sun...overlooking the planets"), but to describe a new vantage point with its promise of mastery and also its enormously expanded burden of sight (Beyond Formalism 24). Frye, no doubt, is confined by his personal limitations, but he has made the right gestures. If the spatial orientation performed by Brahma and Buddha can be regarded as symbolic of the human need for psychic orientation, and if Frye's critic could in fact summon from its abyss the deepest racial experience, then, he could display a total literature spread out in time and space from the still point of the central myth.
The second assumption which explains Frye's penchant for the paradigm of the circle is the rotary movement, cyclic and dialectic, within the central myth. Most of the grammar of archetypes that Frye has given attention to in the large body of his practical criticism is a movement of this rotary concept. And his interpretations are consciously literary constructions such that it may be a fair assumption to suppose that his practical criticism grows out of the Romantic theory. Frye summarizes the whole movement:

There are two fundamental movements of narrative: a cyclical movement within the order of nature, and a dialectical movement from that order into the apocalyptic world above.

The top half of the natural cycle is the world of romance and the analogy of innocence; the lower half is the world of "realism" and the analogy of experience. There are thus four main types of mythical movement: within romance, within experience, down, and up. The downward movement is the tragic movement... falling from innocence... to catastrophe.
The upward movement is the comic movement, from threatening complications to a happy ending and general assumption of post-dated innocence in which everyone lives happily ever after. . . .

We have thus answered the question: are there narrative categories of literature broader than, or logically prior to, the ordinary literary genres? These are four such categories: the romantic, the tragic, the comic and the ironic or satiric. (Anatomy 161-62).

Frye explains the dialectical part of his rotary movement first. The cyclical pattern reveals the structure of a particular work as a structure of imagery analogous to dream, showing the two opposite polarities of desire and repugnance. At the upper limit of fulfilled desire is the imagery appropriate to apocalypse. In the divine world man imagines a society of gods, in the human a society of men, in the animal world a sheepfold, in the vegetable a garden, in the mineral a city. Fire and water symbolize passage to
the other world. At the other end of the dialectic pattern of myth is what Frye terms "demonic" imagery—the dream expression of human repulsion. In the divine world we imagine cruel gods, in the human scapegoats and cannibalism, in the animal monsters and beasts of prey, in the vegetable sinister forests and wastelands, in the mineral ruins, labyrinths and engines of torture. Fire stands for hell and water for death.

Other than the two extremes, the greater part of dialectic imagery is concerned with

much less extreme worlds than the two which are usually projected as the eternal unchanging worlds of heaven and hell. Apocalyptic imagery is appropriate to the mythical mode, and demonic imagery to the ironic mode in the last phase in which it returns to myth. In the other three modes these two structures operate dialectically pulling the reader toward the metaphorical and mythical undisplaced core of the work. (151).

The upward pull toward apocalypse called "the analogy of innocence" is the imagery appropriate to romance.
It is the world of wise magicians, children and beautiful virgins, the helpful animals of fairy tale, paradisal gardens, and the animistic world of nature spirits. Fire symbolizes purification and water innocent nature. The downward pull toward the demotic called "the analogy of experience" is characteristic of the low mimetic (modern "realism"). In this category the divine world is shunned or explained away, the human world portrays man's common lot often as a parody of the ideals of romance, the animal world is cruel, the vegetable world is typical of the man with the hoe, the mineral appears as a labyrinthine metropolis. Water and fire are both destructive elements, differing only in degree. By referring to these two categories as "innocence" and "experience," Frye once again emphasizes the Blakean influence and Romantic debt.

Frye's cyclic pattern finds its greatest expression in his reading of the cyclical modes of literature analogous to the cycle of the seasons. He is of the opinion that if the critic concentrates on the cyclic pattern, then, he will read the work as a type of narrative analogous to ritual, revealing the
external recurrences of human experience in nature. The rhythm of nature begins with spring, the season of dawn, birth, revival. The analogous narrative is comedy. Summer symbolizes romance, or the movement within innocence. It is the season of maturity and marriage. Autumn, the fall of the leaf, sunset, and death, symbolizes tragedy. The human analogue is the fall of man. Irony or satire is the myth of winter, the season of darkness, cold and dissolution. Frye urges us to see the cycle of the seasons turning ceaselessly when "The four mythoi that we are dealing with, comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony may now be seen as four aspects of a central unifying myth" (192). The cycle starts with spring and returns to it: the hero of romance, analogous to the god of the vegetation myth, is always born again.

Frye's unique approach to the study of archetypes illustrates his speculation that "symmetrical cosmology may be a branch of myth" (161). And we have seen that his approach bears out the contention, since all of the matters considered are an integral part of Frye's critical theory and the understanding of which has been our main concern up to
this point. But since a critical theory, even one as complicated and artistically woven as Frye's, does not exist for its own sake we must determine how the theory works practically. Frye realizes this situation fully and has made a special study of the appearance of symmetrical cosmology in other writers. Frye's authority in the field of English Romanticism is fairly well established and a consideration of the principles outlined in his book on the subject would be worth the effort if only it were for the applications made in his practical criticism. They however, are also important for they provide further insights into the Romantic sources of Frye's own cosmology.

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